

Willem The Conqueror brings victory to local rugby side

12 November 2023

London Cornish 24 Sutton & Epsom RFC 53, Saturday 11th November. It had been a decade since these two clubs had met in a league fixture and only a point separated them this season in the nether regions of the table. Having defeated bottom club Sidcup the previous Saturday Sutton travelled with optimism and were buoyed by the arrival of centre Willem Ratu from New Zealand who was making his debut. The hosts after weeks of hampered availability were also content that they were fielding their best combination so far this campaign.

At the final whistle it was Sutton & Epsom who took the spoils with a 53-24 bonus point victory. This ended a winless streak of 16 away league fixtures for the Black & Whites stretching back to the thrilling Tring 21-20 triumph of March 2022.

On a chill but still afternoon Freddy Bunting initiated proceedings in sunshine under a bright blue sky following a minute's silence for Remembrance Day. London Cornish have endured a hideous run of injuries and their misfortune continued after the first ruck that forced them to bring on Mathew Hand for Tony Pellow and reshuffle their front row. London Cornish's attempt to clear from their 22 was spoiled by Ewan McTaggart using all of his Brobdingnagian stature to charge down the kick then he adroitly transferred the ball to Robbie Martey who offloaded to Josh Pulvirenti to score his first 1 st XV try. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a 7-0 lead. S&E barely had time to reflect on their perfect opening before the hosts drew level. Having forced their way into the 22 they were awarded a penalty that was quickly taken and scrum half Findlay Tweedie scored by the uprights. Michael Edworthy added the simple conversion for 7-7.

Sutton pressed hard to regain the advantage and seemed to have wasted an opportunity but the referee brought play back for a penalty in front of the sticks and Freddy Bunting made it 10-7. Moments later they extended their lead with their second goal of the afternoon. Another kick clipped Black & White hands foreshortening the clearance enabling Gareth O'Brien to gather the ball in centre field. The ball was transferred to Willem Ratu who ran it in from 40 metres with clinical efficiency and devastating pace. Captain Bunting bisected the uprights for a 17-7 lead.

Moments later he was caressing another penalty over the bar for 20-7 to end the first quarter. In the next ten minutes the men in Black & Gold had a chance to get back within a score. Fly half Michael Edworthy was successful with his first penalty but his second attempt drifted wide so London Cornish trailed 10-20 with ten minutes remaining of the first period as they enjoyed their best spell in the game. Sutton broke the shackles courtesy of another erroneous kick. A penalty failed to find touch and Robbie Martey returned it with interest. Soon Willem Ratu was offloading to Chris Farrell and the hooker set off for the line only to be denied by a wonderful covering tackle and the observant visiting touch judge who spotted he put a foot in touch when diving for the corner. It was then the Surrey men who suffered a charge down in their 22 but they escaped unpunished. In the dying embers of the first half Sutton secured their third try. Willem Ratu released Jordan Huie who showed great strength in the 22 before Ewan McTaggart advanced it to the line. The recycled ball came to Gareth O'Brien five metres out who stepped inside and was tackled but managed to reach for the line and score. Freddy Bunting concluded the half with the conversion and Sutton & Epsom led 27-10.

This was familiar territory for London Cornish, in the previous round they trailed at the break by 22-0 at Cobham before a storming 4-try second half brought them to the verge of a classic win. However, it was not long before the Rugby Lane team were extending their lead as they secured a bonus point with their fourth try two minutes into the second period. Willem Ratu n a flurry of surging limbs swatted away touchline tacklers and ran the ball in from his own 22 and the Bunting boot made it 34-10. As with the first half the hosts swiftly replied. This time it was a forward effort rounded off by captain Alex Davey from short-range. Ciaran Johnston took over the kicking duties from the injured Mike Edworthy and reduced the lead to 34-17.

For the Rugby Lane followers of a pessimistic disposition their fears were immediately allayed. Sutton claimed the restart and carried the ball to the Cornish 22 where Alex Mount made the telling break before passing to Rob Hegarty to do the honours. The simple conversion was completed and the scoreboard indicated S&E were 41-17 up within ten minutes of the second half.

The Black & Whites replaced Steve Munford at 9 with Chris Ballard and Tom Boaden swapped with Alex Mount at prop. London Cornish were far from subdued and threw everything at their opponents with winger Rob Mackay a constant threat coming off his wing numerous times zigzagging his way through would be tacklers. The Sutton & Epsom defence held firm with Matt Whitaker's magnificent tackle holding up his opponent over the line.

The next score went to Sutton and Willem Ratu completed his hat trick. He ran into the 22 and appeared to be halted as he stumbled but he rolled over regained his feet and ran in to score.

There followed a collector's item... a missed kick by Bunting as the visitors held a 46-17 advantage. The visitors were now at full throttle. They were held up over the line, a kick ahead was cleared by the scrambling defence and Matt Whitaker was halted from a five-metre scrum. But with ten minutes remaining it looked as if Rob Mackay was going to get his reward for his afternoon's endeavours. He strode towards the corner but was brought down with glory within his grasp by Jordan Huie. In years gone by it would have been acclaimed as a great cover tackle but in this season of the experimental new law it was a high tackle, yellow card and a penalty try.

S&E's penchant for the penalty try has seen five in eight outings and has now reached epidemic proportions as the Cornish trailed 24-46. With the numerical advantage they eyed the opportunity for a bonus point for a fourth try before the match concluded.

Once more the Rugby Lane XV regained the restart and advance to the 22. A tremendous scrummage provided the perfect platform to exploit a generous blindside. Matt Whitaker picked up at 8 drew the defender and Chris Ballard waltzed in for his first Sutton try. Normal service resumed as Freddy Bunting converted to bring his personal tally to 18 points and the score to 53-24. For the remainder of the game the hosts went in search of the valuable bonus point but the visitors showed the same determination in defence as they had in attack. Despite the extra man London Cornish were not able to create a clear cut opportunity and the game ended with no further addition to the score. Sutton & Epsom had finally ended their away day woes and won handsomely 53-24.

Willem Ratu was outstanding on debut not only scoring a hat trick but also his passing and tackling were of the highest quality. As is often the case when an exceptional player is added into the mix it elevates the players around him. Ewan McTaggart had his finest game, Chris Farrell revelled in his role out wide and Robbie Martey racked up impressive stats for players passed and metres made. The travelling supporters were delighted to see the Black & Whites playing once more with pace, power and confidence and are now relishing the remainder of the season. London Cornish never took a backward step but were hindered by losing two of their front five within the first 10 minutes. Notable in a losing cause were Number 8 Adam Wheeler who carried relentlessly and Rob Mackay who was dangerous whenever he got the ball.

Next Saturday Sutton are on the road again when they visit the Memorial Ground to play high-flying Cobham who are fourth in the league only trailing Reeds Weybridge on points difference.

Sutton & Epsom:

Gareth O'Brien, Robbie Martey, Willem Ratu, Lawrence Elliott, Jordan Huie, Freddy Bunting , Steve Munford, Callum Gibson, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville,****George London, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Tom Boaden, Rob Hegarty & Chris Ballard.

London Cornish

Ben Boorman, Robert Mackay, Kyle Hughes, Peter Brogden, George Bromage, Michael Edworthy, Findlay Tweedie, Tony Pellow, Oscar Cruz, Rory Ling, David Chalkey, Tom Carr, Alex Davey ©,****Jack Waving & Adam Wheeler.

Replacements: Mathew Hand, Mark Osei-Tutu & Ciaran Johnston.

Epsom & Ewell FC imperious victory in Imperial Fields

12 November 2023



Tooting & Mitcham 0-3 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 11th November 2023.

Cast your mind back to the 4th March 2003. Some young lad by the name of Justin Timberlake was at number 1 with Cry Me A River, Tony Blair was Prime Minister and our Manager was Adrian Hill, who was approaching the end of a club record thirteen year tenure in his second spell in charge. Oh yes, and we defeated Tooting & Mitcham United by four goals to three in an Isthmian League victory on our first ever visit to Imperial Fields.

Just over twenty years on, it was great to see our former Manager, now aged 78, amongst the crowd as we achieved our first victory over the Terrors since that date and it has to be said that this 3-0 win; our best since 1934, probably flattered us a little, as the match was very even for a large part of the contest. However, a second half sending off for the home side followed by a crazy own goal enabled us to cruise home comfortably by the time the final whistle blew.

There were five players in our starting eleven who had taken the field in Epsom colours last season, yet there were also three in the Tooting & Mitcham team! We renewed acquaintances with Tom Theobald, Johnny “Sonic” Akoto, and Warren Colman, not to mention another former Salt Kieron Campbell who was with us in three earlier spells and this wasn’t even including Captain Alex Penfold who was an unused substitute and their Manager Jamie Byatt who was not in the playing line up on this occasion.

For our part, we made just the two changes from our defeat against Sutton United with Tijani Eshilokun coming in for George Owusu, while Jaan Stanley played ahead of Luke Miller, although both of the replaced players were on the bench and would come on later in the contest.

The home side were in decent form and the match programme referred to their aim of reaching for the playoffs. Arguably they were, and remain under more pressure to achieve this season than our club does, and much of that pressure is centred on their Centre-forward Shay Brennan who had a number of goals already this season. However, one feature of this match was that he was kept very quiet throughout and it could be argued that this was our best defensive performance of the season as a result, as Harvey Keogh didn’t have a massive amount to do in this match, certainly compared to the recent games we have played.

The first half probably should have finished 0-0 as neither team created a vast amount. Both keepers made the occasional save; Theobald, the hero in our penalty shoot out win over Selsey last season was down well to save from Rory Edwards, while Keogh made a couple of decent blocks too, but nothing too taxing. Despite the lack of real chances for either side, we took the lead in the 34th minute from a well directed Edwards corner that was challenged for by a number of players from both sides, but the ball looped up off them and was heading towards goal. Fortunately Eshilokun got a toe to the ball on its way down to get it over the line from close range and save me from trying to work out who the scorer would have been otherwise!

In reality, neither team probably deserved to be ahead to that point, but this is sometimes where expectation and pressure tells. A 0-0 draw would have been fine for us, but totally unacceptable to the home side who would have been well aware of our recent defeats to Knaphill and Farnham Town and aiming to replicate them. However, they were severely hampered in that target just two minutes into the second half when Edwards played a nice pass towards Stanley, only to then be taken out by a challenge from behind. It looked a naughty challenge, but was still a surprise to me when a straight red card was shown in the direction of Jayden Hutchings, although other people who saw the challenge from another angle said it was deserving of a straight red.

Ironically, the home side then had their best spell of the match, but they were struggling to find Brennan and Keogh kept out a good volley from the edge of the penalty area with his feet. He was then down well to make a low save that came from a decent move down the right and a near post strike, but the threat from the home side completely evaporated in the 81st minute when we scored our second goal. It’s hard to say exactly how much credit we deserve for this one as it was mostly down to the home side as Sam Orisatoki sent the ball twenty yards back to Theobald who then missed the ball with his kick completely and despite rushing back to try and repair the damage, the ball had crossed the goal line by the time he was able to clear it and the Assistant flagged accordingly.

The goal knocked the stuffing out of the home side and the match was all over as a contest. Five minutes later we had a third as Edwards, arguably playing his best game for our club, got down the left wing and pulled the ball back to substitute Luke Miller in the vicinity of the penalty spot and he drilled the ball first time into Theobald’s bottom right hand corner to seal the points. We had further chances in the closing minutes as Tommy Williams played a one-two with Ade Batula but dragged his shot beyond the far post, while Batula’s shot was deflected over the bar, although no corner was awarded. In the end it didn’t really matter and whilst the scoreline may have been slightly generous, I have bemoaned the fact that we were unlucky to lose by so many in recent weeks, so it’s swings and roundabouts really!

I wrote last week that good, hard-working performances like those at Farnham and Knaphill were great, as long as we could take that on and get something from our next games, and I’m happy to report that we did exactly that at Imperial Fields with a performance that was very similar to the one at Spelthorne Sports three weeks previously, but was also our first three goal haul away from home in any competition since winning 3-1 at Billingshurst back in April and our largest away win since we scored five at Oakwood back in August 2022. We go to Sandhurst on Tuesday in good form and are now up to third from bottom of the table with games in hand. A good weekend!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, Tijani Eshilokun, Thompson Adeyemi, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Luke Miller for Stanley (59), Ade Batula for Eshilokun (77), George Owusu for Nelson-Roberts (87), Tino Carpena for Springett (93)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom Derby football cup defeat

12 November 2023



Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Sutton United. Surrey Senior Cup – Second Round. Tuesday 7th November 2023.

Our first match back in the Surrey Senior Cup for five years, coupled with the fact it was our first meeting for twelve years against our old rivals Sutton United, ensured that a healthy crowd, counted at 135, were present at Cobham for this encounter, maybe like me with memories of past encounters and rivalries long consigned to history.

It is obviously difficult to assess the quality of this performance. This was often the case back when we were at Step Six and played Development and Reserve teams and you never really knew quite what standard of opponent you were going to face. Indeed we defeated a Sutton United Development eleven by seven clear goals in the Surrey Premier Cup not long ago, but it was clear from the start that this wasn’t going to happen in this match. It was also good to see two former Salts in the Sutton dugout as Jimmy Dack and Ross White took charge for the visitors. Dack played for us as a 16 year old under Ricky Kidd from March 1989 before moving up the footballing pyramid, while White made his debut in March 2011, although it was his younger brother Sean that made the lion’s share of their appearances for our first team.

Our club chose to insult people’s intelligence on its social media by making out that we had narrowly lost to a team five divisions above us, when quite obviously we weren’t playing their first eleven. Their Academy side provided more than enough of a challenge though and deservedly won this match 2-1, despite our boys taking the lead just after the hour. In fact, the margin of victory would probably have been greater, had Harvey Keogh not made half a dozen superb saves in what was arguably his best performance for the club.

Keogh made his first start with the Captain’s armband on in the absence of injured Zach Powell, and it was also good to see Tommy Williams back on the field after his own injuries, while Caretaker Manager Steve Springett made his first start of the season too. Further forward Thompson Adeyemi came back into the starting eleven along with George Owusu as Sirak Negassi and Ade Batula dropped out, although the latter would join the action from the bench later. Finally, Ollie Thompson was good to go again after being withdrawn just before kick off against Knaphill and he came in for Ash Snadden.

We had an early scare in just the seventh minute when Jack Phillips sent an early strike just beyond out far post, but in response Luke Miller put Owusu through on goal and his shot was tipped onto the bar by Bradley House, although the offside flag would have ruled the strike out anyway. Adeyemi was next to strike the Sutton bar with a header, but he too was offside.

Just after the half hour mark Keogh made the first of his fine saves with a point blank range save from a far post header and he had to make another low one to keep the scores level at the break. However, the second half was just ten minutes old before he had to make a further good block from a header that was definitely going in.

Despite threatening rarely to that point, we then won a penalty in the 60th minute. A good move down our left flank ended with a trip on Edwards right in the

corner of the penalty area. With Jaan Stanley on the bench and Marlon Pinder absent, Miller stepped up to take the spot kick, only to see it well reached by House, diving to his left to parry the ball for a corner. With the visitors maybe thinking they had got away with it, a Steve Springett corner eluded everyone and was nodded in from close range at the back post by Ethan Nelson-Roberts in the 62nd minute.

We made a couple more substitutions with Lewis Elsom, joining from Aldershot Town, made his debut when he came on for Williams, while Stanley replaced Miller, probably wishing he had come on ten minutes earlier to take the spot kick! Stanley was soon attacking and his deflected strike from twenty yards had House scrambling to keep the ball out, although the ball was going just wide anyway.

Unfortunately for us, as the match reached the closing stages the visitors drew level. With the clock showing the 76th minute a deep ball in from the right was knocked back across goal where a powerful low shot was again well blocked by Keogh, but the loose ball was then knocked in from ten yards out by George Vorster.

It was the least they deserved though, and Keogh had to be alert once again to tip a Sutton header over the bar, but was powerless to stop their winner in the 86th minute as a dangerous run from the left resulted in the ball being laid back into the path of Vorster who drilled a low shot into the far corner from around 15 yards out which proved to be the winner.

The game turned around quite rapidly here and it is becoming noticeable that we are conceding a lot of late goals. If you look at those which have come after the 80th minute of our matches, we have scored twice, yet conceded thirteen! I'm not sure if our people were aware of this, but hopefully something can and will be done that will increase either our fitness or our game management, or both. Luckily this match was largely irrelevant in the grand scheme of things, but with important League matches coming up against Tooting & Mitcham United, Sandhurst Town and AFC Croydon Athletic, we need to tighten up in those final stages.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Tommy Williams, Nick Inwugwu, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Ollie Thompson, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Rory Edwards, George Owusu, Thompson Adeyemi, Luke Miller

Subs: Ben Amissah for Owusu (55), Lewis Elsom for Williams (64), Jaan Stanley for Miller (67), Tino Carpena for Springett (75), Ade Batula for Nelson-Roberts (81)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Sutton and Epsom sink Sidcup

12 November 2023



Sutton & Epsom RFC 30 – Sidcup 20. Saturday 4th November. Regional 2 South East is a most competitive league where any side can overturn its opponent so giving hope to supporters every Saturday afternoon. However, for the followers of Sutton and Sidcup they knew only too well that on occasion you have to win games. This campaign had witnessed only a solitary success for both camps and this fixture was therefore a meeting of the damned duo in terms of relegation spots. To the unaffiliated observer the game may have had the appearance of two bald men fighting over a comb but to these two proud clubs meeting under strained circumstances it was a match of the utmost importance. The result would lead to the bells ringing out for both clubs whether they were the alarm variety of relegation or angelic church ones heralding success was still to be determined. By the final whistle it was the hosts who were in the mood for the seasonal fireworks as they triumphed by 30-20.

After the season stalled in deference to the World Cup Final hostilities renewed at Rugby Lane as Sutton welcomed one of her oldest opponents in Sidcup. Despite the tempestuous weather the match was played on a fine surface and mercilessly minus rain as Freddy Bunting kicked off. The opening exchanges saw both teams attempting to run the ball. The Kent side's first entry to the Sutton 22 was undermined when they conceded a penalty. In contrast for S&E a Callum Gibson charge down saw Chris Farrell surge towards glory before the referee brought it back for a penalty to S&E. Captain Bunting kicked to the corner for the attacking line out. Having secured the ball the forwards escorted George London over the line to score the first try. Freddy Bunting added the extras for a morale-boosting 7-0 lead after 10 minutes.

Following some excellent defence the Black & Whites looked like giving Sidcup a second dose of medicine as they kicked a penalty into the corner. However, the throw in went askew and the visitors were awarded a relieving scrummage. Ten minutes later the men from Kent showed S&E how to score from an attacking line out but not in the classical mode. Having secured the ball Mr Tobias Whinney halted proceedings with a shrill blast of his whistle. He had taken objection to winger Max Russell's involvement and issued a yellow card and then jogged under the posts to give the Crescent Farm side a penalty try. This was the fourth time this season that the hosts had suffered this draconian sanction as the visitors levelled the score at 7-7.

Reduced to 14 Sutton & Epsom introduced Messrs Boaden & Hegarty for Gibson & London in the hope of holding out. Sidcup were then inconvenienced by the loss of scrum half Sam Leamon to injury. Then his half-back partner, Josh Twyford, made a telling contribution with a steepling kick. The ball descending from the heavens and S&E winger Robbie Martey jumped to contest for the ball on halfway but the ricochet was re-gathered by Sidcup. A second try was only prevented by scrambling defence and an excellent Martey tackle. Sadly for Sutton it was the most temporary stays of execution as the visitors swiftly recycled the ball and forced their way over the whitewash. Josh Twyford added the conversion for a 14-7 lead.

The first period had been an even affair but was ending with Sidcup in the ascendancy. The visitors next sortie into the host's 22 saw Sutton fullback Ciaran Mohr injure his shoulder to be replaced by the experienced Steve Munford who went to 9 as the incumbent Chris Ballard retreated to the open pastures of 15. The Black & Whites appeared to be navigating the half into a safe haven when they conceded a penalty whilst in possession. Josh Twyford stepped up to conclude the first half with a sweetly struck penalty to extend the visitor's advantage to 17-7.

Despite the lowly league status of the two teams it had been an entertaining first period with both sides carrying the ball with intent but being thwarted by efficient defences who tackled with a relish that reflected the significance of the fixture.

The match re-started and soon Josh Twyford was initiating an aerial bombardment that had proved beneficial in the billowing wind of the first half. This time Sidcup did not gain points from the sensible tactic. Both teams were aware of the significance of the first score in the half. Sutton's efforts were undermined as their line out temporarily malfunctioned and offered the visitors an easy escape. After ten minutes S&E scored through their most familiar method. The half-moon countenance of the Sidcup offender gave no hint of what he had been doing or, indeed, thinking but it was enough for Mr Tobias Whinney to award a penalty. Freddy Bunting collected three points for the Sutton cause as the scoreboard recorded 10-17. Within five minutes an excellent interception by the Black & Whites' lock Ewan McTaggart saw the hosts on the attack and awarded another penalty. Freddy Bunting reduced the deficit to 13-17.

The penalty pendulum swung back in the favour of the Kent men when a few minutes later the referee awarded them an opportunity to go for goal. Josh Twyford stepped up to the mark to make it 20-13 in Sidcup's favour as the game entered the final quarter. With a sense of symmetry the visitors were reduced to 14 men for a high tackle on Max Russell who had earlier enjoyed an unexpected ten minute rest. Soon after the Black & Whites had another penalty well within Freddy Bunting's range but the captain opted to kick to the corner. The gamble resulted in an unexpected bonus. The catch and drive was halted illegally and Sidcup were reduced to 13 men as Sir took his yellow card from his pocket once more. S&E opted for the 5-metre scrum but heroic defence on the line by the visitors saw them hold up the pack to be awarded the drop out from their line.

Before the crowd had time to digest if that might have been the turning point of the match the Surrey men were back on the attack. Chris Farrell found space out wide and burst into the 22 and his perfectly timed pass was taken by flanker Rob Hegarty who squeezed in at the corner. A fabulous touchline conversion brought the scores level at 20-20 and the crowd to their feet. With Sidcup still not returned to their full compliment Sutton ran back the restart.

In such circumstances retaining possession is vital. S&E swung the ball from side to side and eventually Sidcup ran out of numbers. Once more it was the ubiquitous Farrell, on the left wing rather than the right this time, who was the provider as he passed to Robbie Martey on halfway. The winger showed all of his vast experience and class as he weaved his way to the line leaving would be tacklers rooted to the spot like potted plants. Freddy Bunting added the conversion as the two goals within five minutes had the Black & Whites leading 27-20.

The reinvigorated hosts went searching for a fourth try and a bonus point. Max Russell broke into the 22 but conceded a penalty on the deck. As the game entered time added on Sutton were awarded a penalty near halfway. Captain Bunting wisely took aim for goal with the reward of extending the advantage to beyond one score. He made it six successful strikes out of six and S&E led 30-20. Spirited Sidcup gathered themselves for a final assault and took advantage of the host's indiscipline to kick a penalty into the 22. Any anxiety for the Rugby Lane supporters was alleviated as their side turned over the ball and won a penalty. Shortly afterwards the referee concluded proceedings and the Black & Whites had a vital 30-20 win.

The hard fought contest was eventually decided by Sutton exploiting their numerical advantage when they played probably their best rugby of the season. In a fine effort by all concerned the hosts defence was much improved. The visitors contributed much to the match and gave no indication of being any worse than previous visitors this season despite their position in the league. Sutton & Epsom travel to the Richard Evans Memorial Playing Fields next Saturday 11th November to take on London Cornish. Please note that the game will kick off at 2:15 pm and for those spectators who enjoy indulging in the post-match reflections these will take place at Roehampton Cricket Club.

Sutton & Epsom:

Ciaran Mohr, Robbie Martey, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting ©, Max Russell, Gareth O'Brien, Chris Ballard, Callum Gibson, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, George London, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Tom Boaden, Rob Hegarty & Steve Munford.

Sidcup:

Charlie Pooley, Luke Sheridan, Dan Masters, Zak Jones, Louis Keeley, Josh Twyford, Sam Leamon, Joe Brady, Harry Large, Teddy Gibbons, Jack Dutton ©, Steve Ecan, Tom Epps, Liam Healey & Jon West.

Replacements: Jon Fordham, Harry Gibbons & George Bird.

Epsom and Ewell FC caught Knapping?

12 November 2023



Epsom & Ewell 0-4 Knaphill. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 4th November 2023. We have been unfortunate to come up against arguably the best two teams in the League in consecutive weeks and we appear to have been soundly beaten by both if you look solely at the score lines. However, as with last week's defeat at Farnham, we gave as good as we got for large periods of this game, only to fall apart in a ten minute spell at the end of the match, when the visitors scored three times to complete a 4-0 victory over our boys.

Now, all who read these reports will know that I'm honest with my summaries, even when we are poor, and it might sound like a broken record here, but we have actually played quite well in our last two matches. However, the two teams we have faced just had more quality than we do currently and whilst we are now a lot more competitive and will fancy our chances of survival this year, these two results will not define our season.

In a match that was in my opinion excellently officiated, with exception of a penalty shout towards the end that was never likely to be given, due to the referee allowing the game to flow instead of blowing the whistle every few seconds, we made a few changes to our starting eleven. In came Nick Inwugwu and Ash Snadden at the back, while further forward Luke Miller came in for his first start since returning to our club in a more central role than where we used to see him play a couple of seasons back while Sirak Negassi earned another start on the left wing after playing well from the bench last week. We then had to make a final change after Ollie Thompson tweaked his knee in the warm up and it was decided not to risk things; Reece Tierney coming in for him, although Thompson remained as a named player on the bench.

The opening ten minutes of the match were very much in favour of the confident visitors who had been unfortunate to pick up just the one point in Jersey the Saturday before and an early chance was headed over the bar before they took the lead in the 11th minute when a ball into the right hand channel was then set up into the stride of Calvin Camara running across the edge of the penalty area and he guided a low left footed shot beyond Harvey Keogh into the far corner to open the scoring.

The crowd of 98, boosted largely by the postponements of other local matches is definitely a positive advertisement for having an artificial surface. However, one of the negatives appears to be that we just cannot go ninety minutes on this surface without picking up at least one injury and this time, following a corner, Zach Powell went down after twisting his lower leg as he landed and he required treatment, although was unable to continue, so Thompson Adeyemi joined the action and it appeared as though Keogh took the Captain's armband on. If our keeper was Captain, it would represent one of our youngest ever players to hold the position.

The remaining twenty minutes of the half was very even, although it was apparent that the visitors were very solid at the back and we rarely threatened to break through. Inwugwu made a good run on the right and reached the touchline, but his cross was parried away by Jos Barker and we went in at the break, just the one goal down, but very much in the match still.

The first item of note in the second half came when the referee had to stop play to take issue with one of our substitutes, George Owusu, who was warming up perfectly normally on the touchline. However, his fluorescent yellow top was clashing with that of the Knaphill team and he was asked to remove it!

The game continued in a similar pattern to that of the first half with both teams cancelling each other out in midfield. Rory Edwards and Adeyemi were both heavily involved, but we were unable to find that pass through to our front men. In the 69th minute a deep Knaphill corner was met with a towering downward header at the far post but Keogh did really well to keep the ball out. However, the visitors were getting closer and they had a goal disallowed for offside just four minutes later before putting another header over the bar from a good position. Then Keogh was down low to make another good save from close range as Camara threatened a second goal.

However, it wasn't until the 80th minute when the man of the match got involved. Joining the action as a substitute Spencer Whitfield received a clever slide rule pass inside Inwugwu, which he ran onto and cut back before clipping the ball past Keogh into the far corner from 12 yards to give Knaphill that two goal cushion.

And with the result no longer in doubt, the visitors really turned it on. Keogh had to make another low save to turn the shot around the post. Owusu had by now been introduced although Ethan Nelson-Roberts' good work on the left was wasted a little when Owusu sent the shot high and wide. Then in the 88th minute we gave the ball away in midfield and Knaphill broke on the left, sending a sweeping delivery across goal to Stacey Thripp at the far post and his delivery was bundled in by Whitfield from close range. Moments later Edwards tumbled in the area, and whilst we have seen penalties given before, you knew it wouldn't be given today and we allowed the visitors to break where Whitfield then completed his hat trick at which point the substitute was then promptly subbed off again!

In summary, we competed well for all but the first ten and the last ten minutes of this match, but against the top teams in this division we need to accept we are still a fair way short and the upcoming match at Imperial Fields against Tooting & Mitcham United will provide a much better guide of where we are likely to finish this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Ash Snadden, Zach Powell (c), Reece Tierney, Luke Miller, Rory Edwards, Ade Batula, Jaan Stanley, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Thompson Adeyemi for Powell (25), George Owusu for Negassi (55), Tino Carpena for Batula (70), Marlon Pinder for Miller (84)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Scoreline does not reflect performance

12 November 2023



Farnham Town 5-1 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 28th October 2023.

Our trip to the Memorial Ground, home to Farnham Town, was always going to be a challenging one. They have a large budget, a great team and will almost certainly go up as Champions. In four home League matches coming into this match they had scored seventeen goals and conceded none, so under the circumstances, a 5-1 defeat not only represented the first time any club had breached their home defences in this competition, but I will go further and say that the scoreline was harsh on our boys who battled hard for the entire ninety minutes and deserved more than the one goal we registered.

In fact we more than held our own for large parts of this game and although our hosts held the balance of possession over the match, it was only the clinical finishing of our opponents, and Darryl Sanders in particular with a first half hat trick, that proved to be the main difference between the teams.

Our Manager Steve Springett was back in the dugout and as you might expect after our win at Spelthorne Sports he made only one change with Marlon Pinder returning to the starting eleven in place of Sirak Negassi who was on the bench. We made a bright start with a good run on the left from Jaan Stanley after just 50 seconds, although his low cross was just cut out by a defender ahead of the oncoming Ade Batula.

The opening ten minutes were fairly even and it almost came as a surprise when Farnham took the lead in the twelfth minute from a free kick unnecessarily conceded, although still some way out. However, Harry Cooksley's free kick was delivered to the near post where Sanders met the ball with a deft, glancing header that gave Harvey Keogh no chance at all as the ball nestled in the far corner of the goal. Worse was to come just ninety seconds later as Sanders collected the ball from a throw in and sent a superb curling effort right into the top corner from nearly twenty-five yards to put the hosts two goals up.

Moments later we had a good chance after a poor clearance from Pat Nash which went straight to Stanley, but with a decent sight of goal he rushed his chance and scuffed the ball gently through to Nash who was able to recover his position by this time. We then had a moment of controversy when Keogh came out to punch the ball clear, only to be completely taken out by a Farnham player. Luckily our keeper was able to continue after treatment, yet not even a card was issued to the assailant. The cynic in me would call this a home town decision and this belief was enhanced when ten minutes later Tijani Eshilokun picked up a yellow card for a slightly late challenge that wasn't in the same category as the previous assault.

We were having some success with deliveries into the box as we picked up on the second ball once the initial deliveries were half cleared, and Eshilokun had the next chance as the ball fell to him just outside the penalty areas, but his volley wasn't hard enough to trouble Nash. We were actually having a real go at our hosts and Batula broke down the right, before cutting inside onto his left foot, but his attempt went wide of the near post. Keogh was down to make a good save from a powerful Farnham strike but we were soon up the other end again and Batula's shot was deflected for a corner that came to nothing.

The home side were on the attack soon after and sent a header just wide of Keogh's post, but just before half time a good passing move ended with Sanders almost walking the ball into the net to complete his hat trick and we went in at the break three goals down, which was incredibly harsh on our boys.

Just before the break we had replaced the injured Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez with Nick Inwugwu and for the first time in club history we then made a quadruple substitution as early as the 51st minute, leaving our bench hoping we didn't suffer any injuries in the remainder of the match. We have never made five changes to a line up this early in a competitive match before, but at 3-0 down, it was worth a gamble!

Farnham nearly extended their lead two minutes after this, but Adam Liddle was closed down well by Keogh and put his shot wide. In response a Rory Edwards corner was met by a Thompson Adeyemi header, but the flick on went beyond the far post and out for a goal kick. The next corner wasn't such a good one, but it was cleared to the edge of the area where substitute Negassi let fly with a powerful strike that was arrowing straight for the top corner, only for it to be diverted by the slightest deflection from the head of Sanders, who was now saving goals at one end instead of scoring them at the other!

The next corner again didn't get past the first man and as the home team broke away, Ethan Nelson-Roberts had to take one for the team as he cleared out the attacking player. Fortunately there were defenders covering and he received only a yellow card.

We attacked again and a great pass from Edwards to Negassi on the left resulted in him cutting inside his man and sending him the wrong way but his shot was well blocked by Nash from twelve yards. However, we conceded a fourth goal in the 62nd minute when a deep Farnham corner was headed back across goal, where it was then headed into the danger area and Liddle was able to nod the ball in from close range.

The clouds had been gathering during the second half and as was the case at Spelthorne Sports seven days previously, the heavens opened just after the hour mark, but in the 68th minute we had some reward for our hard work as some great interplay in midfield enabled the ball to be fed through to another substitute George Owusu who rounded the keeper before slotting the ball into the net with his left foot.

The game continued to swing from end to end and Keogh had to make another good save from Owen Dean before Nelson-Roberts produced a mazy run, beating three men before teeing up substitute Luke Miller, whose shot from twelve yards maybe should have been a little higher and Nash was able to get across to palm the ball away for a corner, which again didn't get past the first man. If there was a criticism today, it was that we didn't use our set pieces well enough.

There was still time for another opportunity at both ends. A nice Eshilokun pass to Negassi gave him the chance to embarrass Michael Kinsella again, although the end product was straight at Nash, and then in the second minute of injury time Dean broke through on the right hand channel and finished clinically past the exposed Keogh.

This was one of our better performances of the season. A few weeks ago we went to Jersey Bulls and subsided meekly without a shot on target, but this performance, against a team that will surely wrap up the League title before March is out and may even be walking out at Wembley Stadium in the FA Vase Final come May, proved that we are now competitive enough at this level to survive the season. We have a hard set of fixtures this month, but the most difficult of them all on paper has now passed, and whilst no one can ever be happy to be on the wrong end of a 5-1 defeat, I thought there were many positives that our team could take from this match.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Powell (c), Ollie Thompson, Ade Batula, Rory Edwards, Marlon Pinder, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Ofosu-Hernandez (45+1), Sirak Negassi for Batula (51), Luke Miller for Stanley (51), Reece Tierney for Powell (51), George Owusu for Pinder (51)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Sutton & Epsom go under at Gravesend

12 November 2023



Gravesend v Sutton and Epsom RFC. Saturday 21st October. The last occasion that Sutton & Epsom ventured to the Rectory Field was during Gravesend's triumphant title-winning season of 2013-4 as the host's mighty pack and Italian international half-backs secured a 41-3 victory. Much has changed in the last 10

years and George London was the sole Sutton survivor from that torrid afternoon. Gravesend have recovered from their harrowing opening day of this campaign against the Ironsides and came into the contest with a couple of wins including an impressive success at Medway who had defeated S&E the previous round. After a match of fluctuating fortunes the home team secured a bonus point win by 36-29.

To the relief of all concerned Saturday's torrential rain coincided with S&E's coach journeys to and from Kent. On a mild afternoon, the sun shone but there was a stiff breeze that favoured Sutton when captain Freddy Bunting kicked off the fixture. Keen followers of the Surrey men often feel that a strong drink is a prerequisite to watching the first quarter but on Saturday they made a wonderful start. Australian debutant Josh Pulvirenti soared into the air to secure the first lineout on the opposition 22 and the ball was spun wide for Luca Shaw to be denied in the corner by the touch judge's flag. Consolation for the visitors was immediate as the referee bought the game back for a penalty. It was kicked to the corner, the lineout was secured and a few carries later the Sutton pack was over the line and Matt Whitaker had the try. Freddy Bunting chipped over the simple conversion for a 7-0 lead after 5 minutes. A couple of minutes later the first of many penalties for high tackles provided Freddy Bunting with the opportunity to increase the lead. Making light of the distance and angle he extended the lead to 10-0.

The home XV soon were pressing for points with a lineout in the visitor's 22 but a technical infringement gave Sutton a scrum near their line. Perhaps expecting a long clearing kick on the wind the Kent men were taken by surprise as Number 8 Whitaker took off down the blindside swatting away tacklers with disdain on a 60 metre rampage. Sadly for players and spectators alike the potential entertainment was disrupted by the frequency of the whistle with Gravesend incurring the early wrath of Sir before he transferred his attentions to S&E's infringements.

Freddy Bunting added impressive penalties from distance in the 17th and 22nd minutes and Sutton led by 16-0. The Rectory Field supporters finally had something to cheer when fullback Ben Kite, grandson of club legend John Moxham, burst into the 22 to create a try for centre Chris Brady. The touchline conversion failed but Gravesend were on the board trailing by 5-16. The penalty pendulum now swung violently against the visitors. Soon the referee was beckoning over the Sutton skipper for a word and some cautionary advice. Everyone knew that the next offence would result in a yellow card. True to his word he brandished a yellow card to Josh Glanville on Gravesend's next sortie into the Sutton 22. The ball was kicked into the corner and the hosts had the 5-metre lineout and the opportunity to exploit their strong suit against the numerically reduced opponents. The catch and drive was illegally impeded and a penalty try was awarded. To rub salt into the visitor's wounds a second yellow was flourished and another Josh departed, this time the Antipodean version, Mr Pulvirenti.

The lead was reduced to four points and S&E to 13 men as Gravesend were 12-16 down but with everything in their favour. Sutton & Epsom dug deep and defended with great determination to make it to the interval with no further points conceded and no more men sent to the dug out. The hosts were in the ascendancy despite trailing 16-12 at the break. However, Sutton would only have a couple of minutes of the second half to survive before being returned to their full compliment.

The game resumed with the Rectory Field men eager to take advantage of their numbers and not only reduce the deficit but also take the lead for the first time in the match. Remarkably not a single point was gained against the 13 men. Perhaps Gravesend thought it unsporting to score against a Sutton side in reduced circumstances because no sooner were Sutton back to 15 the Kent side took the lead. Kicking a penalty into the corner their efficient catch and drive produced the points as flanker Samraj Chahal was ushered over the line. The conversion faltered but the home team had clawed back a 16-point gap and now led 17-16. The crowd barely had time to savour this success as Sutton's riposte was immediate. Excellent play got S&E into the 22 and Gravesend on the defensive. A long pass found winger Lawrence Elliott in splendid isolation and on the 503 rd anniversary of Ferdinand Magellan's discovery of his eponymous Straits he had a considerably simpler journey to the try-line to score. Freddy Bunting converted with aplomb as Sutton regained the advantage to lead 23-17.

To mimic the visitors the hosts instantly replied with a try of their own in the corner. The ball was spun wide and a powerful burst by winger Andrew Cooke saw him touch down in the corner. Rhys Betts could not replicate Sutton's touchline conversion and Gravesend trailed by a solitary point, 22-23. The second period had seen three tries in seven minutes and the expectant crowd were hungry for more. S&E were next to score and it was from that most familiar source...the boot of Bunting. The captain's fourth penalty of the afternoon increased the Rugby Lane team's advantage to 26-22. The Kent men surged into the 22 after an excellent probing kick had Sutton scrambling near their line. From the Gravesend 5-metre scrum replacement Junior Rocket went close to scoring but a few phases later and Samraj Chahal picked up his second try of the afternoon. Rhys Betts ended his kicking drought bisecting the uprights to regain the lead by 29-26.

Entering the final 10 minutes the game was very much in the balance. Junior Rocket's explosive entry into the game now turned into a damp squib as he was not only penalised for his covering tackle but also given a yellow card due to its height. Numerical disadvantage once again proved to be no obstacle for the team suffering the man in the bin. As Sutton pressed hard for the next score and to keep the ball alive they rather naively got bundled into touch. A grateful Gravesend had a lineout near halfway and fell back on their tried and tested routine of the catch and drive. They advanced down the paddock and won a penalty. They knocked the ball into the corner with the prospect of another try. For the second time the referee ruled that foul play had prevented a certain try from the lineout and awarded the penalty try, Chris Farrell departed with a yellow card, the teams were 14 each as the Rectory Field XV could reflect on the 36-26 advantage in time added on. For the visitors it looked as if they would be returning to Surrey with nothing to show for their efforts. However, a penalty at the restart enabled Freddy Bunting to increase his personal tally to 19 points and reduce the deficit to a single score thus earning a valuable bonus point. A minute later the match concluded with Gravesend victorious by the score of 36-29.

Any side that outscores the opposition by 6-2 in tries deserves to win any game and Gravesend's clinical efficiency in the attacking lineouts made all the difference. Sutton & Epsom were much improved from last week. The tackling, the lineout and the fluid passing in the backs were better than at any time in the season. Josh Pulvirenti had a fine debut as looks to be a valuable acquisition. Even by his remarkably high standards, Freddy Bunting's kicking was quite exceptional as he landed 5 penalties and 2 conversions from his magnificent seven kicks at goal. Both XVs suffered with discipline and endured a hefty penalty count in an evenly matched and entertaining contest. Ultimately it was the hosts with their formidable catch & drive that held the trump card in this match and they exploited it to the full.

Next Saturday there are no league fixtures in deference to the Rugby World Cup final. The campaign continues on 4th November at Rugby Lane when Sidcup are the visitors. The Kent side recorded their first win of the season on Saturday by defeating London Cornish by 28-21 at Crescent Farm. It will be a basement battle as these two clubs with proud histories sit at the bottom of the league table. The kick off is at the earlier time of 2:30pm.

Sutton & Epsom:

Ciaran Mohr, Luca Shaw, Ross Parsons, Freddy Bunting ©, Lawrence Elliott, Gareth O'Brien, Chris Ballard, Callum Gibson, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, George London, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Tom Boaden, Rob Hegarty & Steve Munford.

Gravesend:

Ben Kite, Harry Tasker, Chris Brady, Jamie Fautley, Andrew Cooke, Rhys Betts, Matt Brady, Brendan Kelly, Terry Papworth, Harry Brooker, Tom Bird, Andrew Hampshire, Matt Hewitt, Samrat Chahal & Connor Murphy.

Replacements: Jamie Forsyth, Stan Dadson & Junior Rocket.

A hard-earned three points for Salts

12 November 2023



Spelthorne Sports 0-1 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division.

On Saturday we visited the Spelthorne Sports Club for another important League match. This was a venue we had visited on four previous occasions without suffering defeat and we extended that sequence to five with a hard working 1-0 win, providing us with our second League win in a row. The win also gave us our third clean sheet, but unlike the first two against Met Police, our keeper Harvey Keogh had to work hard for this one, making some superb saves during the match.

In the absence of our Caretaker Manager Steve Springett; on a holiday that was booked before he took on the role, the bench duties fell to Assistant Manager Ash Snadden and Coach Sam Groombridge and three changes were made from our friendly match against Merstham last week. Zach Powell returned from injury ahead of Nick Inwugwu, while Sirak Negassi came in for Marlon Pinder and Tijani Eshilokun came in for Snadden and we kicked off in front of a rather pitiful

crowd of 37, although admittedly, any “floating supporters” would have always chosen to go to an FA Vase match on this day instead.

We made a bright start with some early interplay on the left between Rory Edwards and Jaan Stanley with the latter’s cross just cut out by the home keeper Shay Honey. In response the home side sent a deep cross to the far post, but the header went over the bar and a few minutes later another right wing cross was acrobatically volleyed over the bar by Kelvin Karanja; a player that had given us a lot of trouble a few years back when at Bedfont & Feltham.

We then had a real scare in the 14th minute after Keogh scuffed a goal kick straight to Leon Iloube and although our defenders closed him down quickly, he still sent a stinging shot towards goal that our keeper somehow clawed away from the top corner to record a fabulous save. This became doubly important a minute later when Ade Batula sent a really good crossfield pass over to Jaan Stanley. Stanley cut back and it looked like the chance might be gone, but then he got round his man and was brought down in the penalty area. I was expecting a yellow card for the defender, but ultimately the award of a penalty was the more important issue and Stanley sent the keeper the wrong way to give us the lead in the 15th minute.

Although we didn’t know it at the time, this goal would be the only one of the match and the rest of the match could arguably be described as attritional! We battled to cover every inch and our job was made a little easier when the Spelthorne Captain, Jamie Fuller chose to argue his case with the referee and found himself in the sinbin. You can always tell when a referee is being assessed as it more often than not leads to a very fussy and over officious display from the man in the middle and this was definitely the case in this match! Admittedly, he had a tricky job in trying to deal with the home bench who yelled and appealed for everything. On one of these occasions Ollie Thompson picked up a yellow card after a coming together between him and another player which looked completely accidental but it’s possible that the official was swayed into awarding the free kick and once it was, I felt that a card would follow.

Then we had another great opportunity on the half hour as Batula got through on goal, but his touch let him down and the ball rolled tamely through to Honey. If we had taken advantage here against the extra man, maybe this would have resulted in a more comfortable position but Fuller was back on the field soon enough and the chance was gone.

The half ended with a couple of Epsom half chances. Eshilokun sent a dangerous looking free kick just wide after Edwards had been fouled nearly thirty yards out, and then Sirak Negassi sent a decent effort just wide from twenty yards with his weaker left foot. We had just about shaded the first half as the players went off for the break.

The second half got going under leaden skies which would eventually become a fairly solid downpour and we nearly had a second goal to celebrate only two minutes in when Thompson Adeyemi clipped a ball goalwards from twenty yards and it ended up only three inches past the post and into the side netting. However, the home side were on the attack soon after and Keogh did well to spread himself to block a shot over the bar.

We had another worry in the 53rd minute when Zach Powell, now Captain following the departure of Callum Wilson to Guildford City, fouled a Spelthorne player. It was hard to tell if it was inside the area or not, but either way we were spared by the sight of the Assistant’s flag going up for offside and the danger was over.

Bearing in mind that the referee had already made it clear he wouldn’t stand for any dissent, it was incredibly hard to believe that anyone would take the risk again, yet in the 54th minute Daniel Watts for the home side and then Eshilokun for us in the 59th both found themselves in the sinbin too after taking issue with decisions that hadn’t gone their way. Both had a very strong case for a free kick, but we need to learn not to say anything to an official, particularly when they have already sent someone for a ten minute rest previously!

It nearly cost us when a left wing cross from the home side was headed goalwards, but Keogh was there to tip the ball over for a corner. From the corner a delivery clearly hit the hand of one of our players, but the referee wasn’t interested in the subsequent penalty shout, despite the rather desperate pleas of the bench some forty yards away from the incident!

As the game reached the closing stages, it certainly was to our advantage to break the game up and Adeyemi picked up a yellow card for delaying a free kick, but when a card was really deserved, after a late lunge on Ethan Nelson-Roberts, there was just a lecture given instead. We welcomed Luke Miller back into the side and he made his 50th appearance for our club, nearly two seasons after his 49th when he joined the action in the 77th minute, but by now we were more interested in hanging on to what we had, instead of attacking too much and Keogh was next to get a yellow card for delaying his goal kick. However, Keogh had already kicked the ball by the time the card was waved, and more time was actually wasted because the referee pulled the game back for a re-kick!

The home side continued to press for an equaliser, but they wouldn’t threaten again and in fact the final opportunity of the match went to Eshilokun who nearly caught Honey out from twenty yards with a chip, but although the keeper’s clearance wasn’t the best contact, it was good enough to keep the ball out.

The final whistle led to celebrations from the players and few supporters that had made the journey and there was an additional bonus as results elsewhere ensured that the win actually moved us off the bottom of the table for the first time in weeks. It may be optimistic to expect to get anything out of our next two matches against Farnham Town and Knaphill, but we were looking like being cut adrift two weeks ago and yet now we are back amongst the other teams with games in hand. We’re not done yet!

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Powell (c), Ollie Thompson, Sirak Negassi, Rory Edwards, Ade Batula, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Tino Carpene for Negassi (61), Luke Miller for Batula (77), Nick Inwugwu for Edwards (92)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Over the Moon for World BMX result for Glyn boy

12 November 2023



A teenager from **Ewell** has been celebrating after his first time representing Great Britain in this year’s BMX World Championships.

Hugo Moon, 15, competed against 200 riders in his age category at the event, which took place in Glasgow.

The annual competition saw 3,000 riders from some 50 countries take part, with each competing in three races, or Motos, to secure a coveted top-four place in the final.

Despite having only taken up the sport in 2020, Hugo, a student at Glyn School, a member of GLF Schools Multi Academy Trust, achieved fourth, third and fourth places in his qualifiers. He finished sixth in the Eighth Final to attain an overall ranking of 48th in the world.

“Hugo had an amazing time and enjoyed being part of the GB team, although it was a little overwhelming, as it was his first experience of an event of this magnitude, and the sheer scale of the event was impressive,” said Hugo’s mother, Sheryl Moon, who was there with his father and older sister to support him at the event.

“It was a rollercoaster of emotions from nervousness to excitement and enjoyment. Participating was not just about winning but also about personal growth. He learnt the value of perseverance, resilience, and the importance of setting goals and striving for them.”

“He loved being in the GB tent with all the camaraderie, nervous energy and banter,” she continued. “The spirit of the GB riders and supporters was so strong; the support and encouragement were heart-warming.

“He was a little disappointed as he really wanted to be in the top 32, but, if he did it again, I’m sure he could achieve that now that he’s experienced his first World

Championships. With some more regional and national races under his belt, he will only get better and faster.”

Currently attached to Runnymede Rockets, with whom he trains twice a week, Hugo first took up Park BMX when he was 12, before progressing to competitive racing aged 13. His selection for Team GB was based on his high national ranking the previous year.

As well as his family, the Year 11 student has been supported by friends and staff members at Glyn School, part of the GLF Schools Multi-Academies Trust – although GCSEs mean he will be unable to compete in next year’s event.

“Watching Hugo compete was nerve-racking but also very exciting for us – I’m sure competing is far easier!” added Mrs Moon. “The crowd atmosphere was electric and so supportive towards all our GB riders. The event was not without drama, with some riders falling and being injured in practice or in races. We were just praying he stayed on his bike and got through each race. But, honestly, we are so proud of him.

“Hugo has been on an amazing and fast journey to get to this level. This experience will stay with him forever, and to be able to say he represented Great Britain is a huge honour.”

Medway Overpower Sorry Sutton & Epsom

12 November 2023



Sutton & Epsom RFC 15 Medway 33. Saturday 14th October.

Last Saturday the league had a rest weekend after five fixtures in September. Buoyed by their stunning success over league leaders Battersea Ironsides, Sutton, at the last time of asking, had travelled to Old Alleynians with great expectations but fell upon hard times. The latest instalment had S and E in search of a morale-boosting victory as they entertained Medway who were looking for their third win on the bounce to continue their climb up the table. Rugby Lane has born witness to much drama already this season.

The agony of a one-point loss to Beckenham was followed by the ecstasy of a win over Battersea Ironsides by the same margin at the last time of asking with Freddy Bunting’s boot being the determining factor on both occasions. Unfortunately for the home support this fixture was a foregone conclusion long before referee Simon Matthews ended the contest with Medway earning a 33-15 bonus point win.

Freddy Bunting kicked off the match under threatening skies with a strong breeze in his face. The Black and Whites have undermined their campaign so far by conceding far too many first quarter tries.

Saturday was to be another dose of unpalatable medicine for S and E players and onlookers alike. These things come in threes sprung to mind as Sutton conceded a free kick and two penalties to gift the visitors a 5-metre lineout. A perfectly executed move saw the ball popped to flanker Jonah Hyde who strolled over. Jack Johnson added the extras for a 7-0 Medway lead after five minutes. If that was dispiriting discipline the next score was lamentably lackadaisical. The visitors kicked a ball speculatively down the middle of the pitch, a harsh critic might have said they had just gifted the hosts possession with that most fashionable of plays. A combination of wind and cruel bounce turned it into a perfect assist for scrum half Ben Dance to gather and run in a second score. Elements apart, it was very poor play by Sutton and Epsom and they paid the severest penalty. Jack Johnson added another telling blow with the simple conversion as the home team trailed 14-0 in under 10 minutes.

Unsurprisingly the Kent side were overflowing with confidence and looked to take advantage of this perfect start where they had had to do so little to be comfortably ahead. They started to play with power and authority. The midfield centre combination of captain Antony Clement and John Sipawa were a constant menace throughout. It was not only their bullocking runs but also the timely offloads to support that impressed as the Surrey men were overrun in the first quarter. Ben Dance got to within 5 metres but his pass failed to find his colleague. Another attack closed in on the Sutton line ended with the ball being passed onto the forehead of an unsuspecting Medway man 5 metres out. Desperate and spirited Sutton defence created timely turnovers as the seemingly inevitable score was averted.

On the half hour drizzle descended, a rainbow embraced the ground and the Sutton slumber ended in dramatic fashion. Jordan Huie, playing his first game of the season, received the ball near halfway. Initially he did well to avoid being bundled into touch and then showing great strength in contact he wriggled free of his pursuers and passed to fullback Ciaran Mohr.

The fifteen with a clear field ahead of him made the 30 metres but was grateful it was not 31. Freddy Bunting’s kick against the wind from the touchline was just buffeted wide but S and E were on the scoreboard trailing 5-14. Buoyed by this success the hosts monopolised possession for the remainder of the first period. The forwards carried with good effect and the ball was spun wide but the visitors were as abrasive in defence as in attack. Freddy Bunting added a penalty to make it 14-8 but then the Black and Whites suffered a double blow. Prop Callum Gibson received a yellow for a tip tackle from the lowest of altitudes and Number 8 Kean Orchard left the field injured. The half concluded with no further incidents with the Rochester-based men 14-8 to the good.

Considering the start of the first period Sutton enduring the opening exchanges of the second half with 14 men was a worrying prospect. On the other side of the balance sheet Medway must have been concerned that what had started out as a procession to victory was now a serious contest with S and E within a score. The visitors pressed hard to make good their numerical superiority but dogged defence by the hosts denied them. A 5-metre Medway lineout saw no repeat of the opening score but Sutton’s relief was short-lived as they failed to clear effectively. The Priestfields outfit pressed hard and scored in the corner following sustained pressure as influential Number 8 Deji Oyesola forced his way over the whitewash.

Though the conversion from the flank failed the Kent team had extended their lead to 19-8 with a touch under half an hour left on the clock. A quick retort from the Black and Whites was imperative but the next score came the way of the visitors and secured them a bonus point. The centre combo of Clement and Sipawa were only just denied but the ball was recycled and open side Jonah Hyde touched down for his second try of the afternoon. Jack Johnson landed another punch on the teetering body of Sutton with the extras to lead 26-8 as the game entered the final quarter. S and E, as per the first period, came to life and flooded into the Medway 22 and Ross Parsons’ pass to the waiting Ewan McTaggart was knocked on by the defence and the hosts had a 5-metre scrum. 18 points adrift on the scoreboard it was a must score moment for the Rugby Lane team. The visiting pack disrupted the scrummage and the briefest of sieges was lifted.

A spirited Sutton valiantly looked for a score running from their own line to halfway at one stage as the clock ran down. The game entered time added on and it was Medway who were next to add to their account. John Sipawa running over two would be tacklers as he maurauded down the touchline to score a try in the corner that his afternoon’s performance surely warranted. The heavyweight boot of Jack Johnson bisected the uprights for 33-8. With the game deep into the time referee Matthews had allocated for stoppages S and E went in search of a consolation. With admirably patience and control the forwards crashed against the apparently adamant defence of the visitors and three penalties followed in rapid succession under the uprights. Finally, the wall of red and amber was breached by prop Callum Gibson who reached over to secure his first try for Sutton. In the blink of an eye Freddy Bunting added the conversion for 33-15. Moments later the referee’s shrill blast of his whistle signalled the end of the contest with Medway deservedly taking the glory with an emphatic 33-15 win.

Medway were the superior side on the day as every aspect of their game functioned admirably. Combative in contact and adventurous in intent they scored five tries. Their support play was of the highest quality as Messrs Clement and Sipawa made telling inroads and offloaded with great effect. For S and E Rob Hegarty had his finest game as he carried the battle to the opposition but brief Sutton spells of quality were insufficient on the day. To pile Pelion on Ossa prop Will Lloyd suffered, probably, a career-ending injury when he ruptured his distal bicep tendon after 50 minutes. Everyone at Rugby Lane wishes him well.

As England are making their final preparations for their World Cup semi-final against South Africa in the Stade de France Sutton and Epsom will be doing battle on the Rectory Field with Gravesend. The Kent club had an initiation of fire this season with a humbling 80-7 defeat to Battersea Ironsides on the opening Saturday. Since then they have rallied with wins over Sidcup and Medway and they will provide a stern test for the Black and Whites.

Sutton and Epsom:

Ciaran Mohr, Luca Shaw, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting ©, Jordan Huie, Gareth O’Brien, Ross Parsons, Will Lloyd, Jack Howes, Callum Gibson, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty and Kean Orchard.
Replacements: Alex Mount, Ben Tame and Jack Briggs.

Medway:
Sean Marriott, Conor Chalmers, John Sipawa, Antony Clement ©, Bobby Ellis, Jack Johnson, Ben Dance, Ryan Eastley, Josh Knight, Todd Johnson, Kyle Woollard, Dan Jackson, Tom Beaumont, Jonah Hyde and Deji Oyesola.
Replacements: Zeki Yesilmen, Josh Mason and Sam Sharpe.